

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2011

SESSION LAW 2012-136
SENATE BILL 416

AN ACT TO AMEND DEATH PENALTY PROCEDURES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 15-188 reads as rewritten:

"§ 15-188. Manner and place of execution.

In accordance with G.S. 15-187, the mode of executing a death sentence must in every case be by administering to the convict or felon a lethal quantity of an ultrashort-acting barbiturate in combination with a chemical paralytic agent until the convict or felon is dead; and when any person, convict or felon shall be sentenced by any court of the State having competent jurisdiction to be so executed, the punishment shall only be inflicted within a permanent death chamber which the superintendent of the State penitentiary is hereby authorized and directed to provide within the walls of the North Carolina penitentiary at Raleigh, North Carolina. The superintendent of the State penitentiary shall also cause to be provided, in conformity with this ~~Article~~ ~~Article~~, and approved by the Governor and Council of State, the necessary appliances for the infliction of the punishment of death and qualified personnel to set up and prepare the injection, administer the preinjections, insert the IV catheter, and to perform other tasks required for this procedure in accordance with the requirements of this Article."

SECTION 2. G.S. 15A-2004(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) A sentence of death may not be imposed upon a defendant convicted of a capital felony unless the State has given notice of its intent to seek the death penalty. Notice of intent to seek the death penalty shall be given to the defendant and filed with the court on or before the date of the pretrial conference in capital cases required by Rule 24 of the General Rules of Practice for the Superior and District Courts, or the arraignment, whichever is later. A court may discipline or sanction the State for failure to comply with the time requirements in Rule 24, but shall not declare a case as noncapital as a consequence of such failure. In addition to any discipline or sanctions the court may impose, the court shall continue the case for a sufficient time so that the defendant is not prejudiced by any delays in holding the hearing required by Rule 24."

SECTION 3. G.S. 15A-2011 reads as rewritten:

"§ 15A-2011. Proof of racial ~~discrimination~~-discrimination; hearing procedure.

(a) A finding that race was the basis of the decision to seek or impose a death sentence may be established if the court finds that race was a significant factor in decisions to seek or impose the death penalty in the defendant's case at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed. For the purposes of this section, "at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed" shall be defined as the period from 10 years prior to the commission of the offense to the date that is two years after the imposition of the death sentence. ~~sentence of death in the county, the prosecutorial district, the judicial division, or the State at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed.~~

(a1) It is the intent of this Article to provide for an amelioration of the death sentence. It shall be a condition for the filing and consideration of a motion under this Article that the defendant knowingly and voluntarily waives any objection to the imposition of a sentence to life imprisonment without parole based upon any common law, statutory law, or the federal or State constitutions that would otherwise require that the defendant be eligible for parole. The waiver shall be in writing, signed by the defendant, and included in the motion seeking relief under this Article. If the court determines that a hearing is required pursuant to subdivision (3) of subsection (f) of this section, the court shall make an oral inquiry of the defendant to confirm the defendant's waiver, which shall be part of the record. If the court grants relief under this



Article, the judgment shall include a finding that the defendant waived any objection to the imposition of a sentence of life imprisonment without parole.

~~(b) Evidence relevant to establish a finding that race was a significant factor in decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the county, the prosecutorial district, the judicial division, or the State at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed may include statistical evidence or other evidence, including, but not limited to, sworn testimony of attorneys, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, jurors, or other members of the criminal justice system or both, that, irrespective of statutory factors, one or more of the following applies:~~

- ~~(1) Death sentences were sought or imposed significantly more frequently upon persons of one race than upon persons of another race.~~
- ~~(2) Death sentences were sought or imposed significantly more frequently as punishment for capital offenses against persons of one race than as punishment of capital offenses against persons of another race.~~
- ~~(3) Race was a significant factor in decisions to exercise peremptory challenges during jury selection.~~

~~A juror's testimony under this subsection shall be consistent with Rule 606(b) of the North Carolina Rules of Evidence, as contained in G.S. 8C-1.~~

~~(c) The defendant has the burden of proving that race was a significant factor in decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the county, the prosecutorial district, the judicial division, or the State county or prosecutorial district at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed. The State may offer evidence in rebuttal of the claims or evidence of the defendant, including statistical evidence. The court may consider evidence of the impact upon the defendant's trial of any program the purpose of which is to eliminate race as a factor in seeking or imposing a sentence of death.~~

~~(d) Evidence relevant to establish a finding that race was a significant factor in decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the county or prosecutorial district at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed may include statistical evidence derived from the county or prosecutorial district where the defendant was sentenced to death, or other evidence, that either (i) the race of the defendant was a significant factor or (ii) race was a significant factor in decisions to exercise peremptory challenges during jury selection. The evidence may include, but is not limited to, sworn testimony of attorneys, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, judicial officials, jurors, or others involved in the criminal justice system. A juror's testimony under this subsection shall be consistent with Rule 606(b) of the North Carolina Rules of Evidence, as contained in G.S. 8C-1.~~

~~(e) Statistical evidence alone is insufficient to establish that race was a significant factor under this Article. The State may offer evidence in rebuttal of the claims or evidence of the defendant, including, but not limited to, statistical evidence.~~

~~(f) In any motion filed under this Article, the defendant shall state with particularity how the evidence supports a claim that race was a significant factor in decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the defendant's case in the county or prosecutorial district at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed.~~

- ~~(1) The claim shall be raised by the defendant at the pretrial conference required by the General Rules of Practice for the Superior and District Courts or in postconviction proceedings pursuant to Article 89 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes.~~
- ~~(2) If the court finds that the defendant's motion fails to state a sufficient claim under this Article, then the court shall dismiss the claim without an evidentiary hearing.~~
- ~~(3) If the court finds that the defendant's motion states a sufficient claim under this Article, the court shall schedule a hearing on the claim and may prescribe a time prior to the hearing for each party to present a forecast of its proposed evidence.~~

~~(g) If the court finds that race was a significant factor in decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the defendant's case at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed, the court shall order that a death sentence not be sought, or that the death sentence imposed by the judgment shall be vacated and the defendant resentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole."~~

SECTION 4. G.S. 15A-2012 is repealed.

SECTION 5. This act does not change any provision in Article 89 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes concerning the procedure for the filing of motions for appropriate relief in capital cases, including the deadlines and grounds upon which a motion may be filed.

SECTION 6. Unless otherwise excepted, this act, including the hearing procedure, evidentiary burden, and the description of evidence that is relevant to a finding that race was a significant factor in seeking or imposing a death sentence, also applies to any postconviction motions for appropriate relief that were filed pursuant to S.L. 2009-464. This act also applies to any hearing that commenced prior to the effective date of this act. A person who filed a postconviction motion for appropriate relief pursuant to S.L. 2009-464 shall have 60 days from the effective date of this act to amend or otherwise modify the motion. Any hearings commenced prior to the effective date shall be continued and shall not be set to reconvene on a date less than 60 days from the effective date of this act.

SECTION 7. This act does not provide, allow, or authorize any motions for appropriate relief in addition to those already authorized under laws applicable to capital trial procedure or Article 89 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes. A capital defendant who filed a trial motion alleging discrimination, or a motion for appropriate relief alleging discrimination, prior to or following the effective date of S.L. 2009-464 is not entitled or authorized to file any additional motions for appropriate relief based upon this act.

SECTION 8. This act does not apply to a postconviction motion for appropriate relief which was filed pursuant to S.L. 2009-464 if the court, prior to the effective date of this act, made findings of fact and conclusions of law after an evidentiary hearing in which the person seeking relief and the State had an opportunity to present evidence, including witness testimony and rebuttal evidence. If, however, an order by a trial court which would otherwise meet the requirements of this section is vacated or overturned upon appellate review, then any further proceedings required to prove a claim that racial discrimination was a significant factor in seeking or imposing the death penalty shall be subject to the provisions of this act.

SECTION 9. If any provision of this act or its application is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this act that can be given effect without the invalid provisions or application, and to this end the provisions of this act are severable.

SECTION 10. Section 1 of this act is applicable for executions scheduled after the effective date of this act. Section 2 of this act is effective for Rule 24 hearings scheduled on or after the effective date of this act. The remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law and applies to all capital trials held prior to, on, or after the effective date of this act and to all capital defendants sentenced to the death penalty prior to, on, or after the effective date of this act.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 21st day of June, 2012.

s/ Walter H. Dalton
President of the Senate

s/ Thom Tillis
Speaker of the House of Representatives

VETO Beverly E. Perdue
Governor

Became law notwithstanding the objections of the Governor at 2:30 p.m. this 2nd day of July, 2012.

s/ Denise Weeks
House of Representatives Principal Clerk